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OCA FILE

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

February 19, 1988

The Honorable William H. Webster
Director
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Mr. Webster:

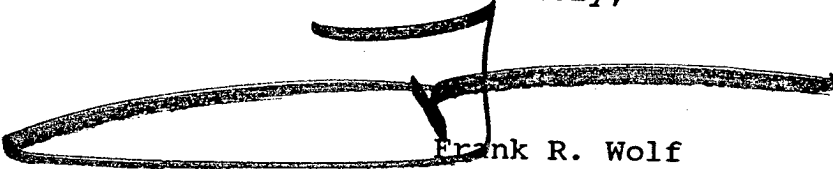
As you may know, H.R. 3757, the Federal Employees Leave Transfer Act, was marked up and reported out of the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee in early February. This bill will make leave sharing a permanent fixture in the personnel management of federal employees. It has an excellent chance of passing the House, and I expect the Senate to appreciate its concept as well. This is a program in which everyone wins.

By virtue of an amendment to H.R. 3757, the Central Intelligence Agency will be in a unique position to shape its own leave sharing program to help employees facing emergency situations. I urge you to seize this opportunity and make your agency's program one to be envied in the federal sector. A recent Federal Times editorial entitled, "The Gift of Time," notes that without this program, "employees who use up their sick leave and annual leave are faced with an impossible choice. They can choose to remain with their loved ones, or they can return to work to accrue additional leave, maintain their benefits, and, of course, earn a paycheck. They cannot have both."

This is an important program which will allow federal employees to help each other and I know you will give your best efforts in seeing that this gift is shared in the CIA. I would appreciate hearing about how you are managing the program.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,


Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress

FRW/jma



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Federal Times
February 8, 1988

Commentary

Editorials • Letters • Columns

The Gift of Time

Before long, federal employees may be making routine deposits to and withdrawals from a new bank. But this bank won't have guards or a vault or even cash.

The deposits and withdrawals will be for a commodity that for some people is even more important, if not elusive, than money. The commodity is time.

Throughout government, there are real life situations that place unforgiving demands on employees' time. There is the employee who learns he is a cancer victim and will need substantial time off for tests and treatment. There is the employee whose child or spouse is injured in an accident or contracts a life-threatening disease.

Without a leave transfer program, employees who use up their sick leave and annual leave are faced with an impossible choice. They can choose to remain with their loved ones, or they can return to work to accrue additional leave, maintain their benefits and, of course, earn a paycheck. They cannot have both.

Then came an idea. Suppose an employee who has leave that will go unused is allowed to give it to another employee who really needs it? Even if it takes place between people of different grades, the exchange should eventually level off, considering the huge pool of people involved.

Initial experiments with leave banks worked out well. Yet months have elapsed, and only a handful of people have benefited from this obviously popular idea.

The time for foot-dragging has passed. Within weeks the Office of Personnel Management will publish guidelines for expanding the program, under congressional authorization for fiscal 1988. All federal employees will be eligible to participate.

Now it is up to individual agencies to set up leave accounting procedures, screening committees for applicants and precise rules about eligibility. They must act quickly. Employees facing emergencies, and those anxious to help them, shouldn't have to wait more months while officials debate details.

We hope Congress will vote later this year to establish a permanent, governmentwide leave bank that gives serious consideration to allowing the exchange of both annual and sick leave. Under this year's expanded program, only donations of annual leave are allowed.

That's because annual leave is on a use-or-lose basis. But sick leave accumulates. The average employee uses only 8.5 of the 13 sick days allocated each year.

This all boils down to a challenge facing the federal work force. Under early experiments, sick leave donations were allowed and constituted much of the time donated.

Whether people will feel so free to part with vacation time is the question.

We hope so. Those who were able to participate in the pilot programs learned that deposits to the leave bank paid big dividends: the knowledge that they were helping co-workers when they needed it most.